


“Contextual determinants of employee motivation”

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CONTEXTUAL DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the elements that motivate employees in small and medium-sized enterprises operating in Bangladesh. The data were obtained using a survey methodology targeting employees who work in small and medium-sized enterprises located in the northern geographic region of Bangladesh. The sample included 284 employees surveyed from May 2023 to June 2023. The paper utilized a five-point Likert scale to evaluate the responses. Regression techniques were used to test the hypotheses. Moreover, to evaluate the hypotheses, a significance level of 5% was utilized, and the data pertaining to the subject matter and purpose of this study were examined using the SPSS program. The results of the paper indicate that employee motivation at SMEs is significantly influenced by employee empowerment, job security, and job training opportunities. Employee empowerment ($\beta = 0.583$) has the highest effect on motivation compared to the other two factors. Additionally, a substantial correlation coefficient ($r = 0.498$) is found between employee motivation and employee empowerment. This study contributes to the literature by investigating the external determinants of employee motivation within small and medium-sized enterprises.

Keywords

SMEs, employee motivation, job security, empowerment, training

JEL Classification

J24, M12, M54

INTRODUCTION

Employees are highly regarded as valuable assets in business enterprises, as they are crucial in attaining organizational objectives. The development of employee motivation has become a crucial requirement for improving business performance. Motivation significantly influences human behavior and productivity. Throughout history, the workforce has been recognized as a valuable asset that plays a crucial role in enhancing the production processes of goods and services. However, in recent times, there have been notable changes in this viewpoint. Therefore, it is crucial for all business entities to undertake the essential initiative of motivating their workforce.

Motivation plays a crucial role in energizing employees within an organization, driving them to perform optimally and sustain high levels of productivity (Kovach, 1995). Therefore, employers and managers must determine the requirements and expectations of their workforce, as well as identify the factors that motivate them to improve their productivity. Motivated employees play a crucial and central role within organizations, as motivation serves as a primary driving force for both individuals and the organizations themselves to achieve excellence (Hansen et al., 2002). This statement remains applicable in diverse sectors, including the public and SME domains.

SMEs are widely recognized as a potential driver for a nation's overall economic progress. SMEs have played a crucial role in driving Bangladesh's economic development over a considerable period

(Asheq et al., 2021). However, upon conducting a thorough review of the available scholarly literature, it becomes evident that there is a noticeable lack of research regarding employee motivation in the Asian context, particularly within the small and medium-sized enterprise sector in Bangladesh.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

This idea of motivation, particularly work motivation, has been extensively studied within social sciences. The concept of motivation can be defined as a cognitive and behavioral process that stimulates an employee's inclination to accomplish both personal and overall organizational goals (Lindner, 1998). Motivation is widely acknowledged as a crucial factor in workplace behavior, serving as a mechanism to inspire individuals to take actions that contribute to the attainment of organizational objectives. It refers to the stimuli that initiate, direct, and accelerate an individual's behavioral inclination toward the expected outcome (Islam & Ismail, 2008). Employee motivation can be defined as the level of enthusiasm and dedication with which an employee strives to accomplish organizational goals while also meeting personal needs (Skudiene & Auruskeviciene, 2012; Morrell, 2011). The concept of work motivation encompasses a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic elements that stimulate work-related actions and affect their course and duration (Rusu & Avasilcai, 2014). In any organizational setting, regardless of whether it is in the public or private sector, employees have the potential to derive motivation from a blend of extrinsic and intrinsic factors (Manolopoulos, 2008). The identification of the factors that influence employee motivation is an essential endeavor for businesses aiming to enhance their organizational efficacy (Pang & Lu, 2018). There are several factors that can significantly contribute to the value experienced by employees and subsequently enhance work motivation.

The concept of job security refers to the ability of employees to sustain their positions, thereby reducing the likelihood of unemployment (Lucky et al., 2013). Furthermore, it serves as a means to mitigate the concerns that employees may have regarding the possibility of job termination (Dhanpat et al., 2019). The importance of job se-

curity extends beyond employees themselves, as it provides employers with the advantage of retaining their current workforce and reducing costs associated with recruitment (Senol, 2011). Moreover, job security can serve as a motivational mechanism to incentivize employees to actively pursue organizational goals, thus guaranteeing the organization's overall prosperity. It involves the ideas of empowerment and confidence in one's employment prospects (Brockner et al., 1992). Conversely, job insecurity is characterized by an involuntary and widespread fear of losing one's job (Cheng & Chan, 2008). Organizations that provide their employees with job security demonstrate a consistent commitment to their workforce over a prolonged period of time (Fey et al., 2000). Multiple subsequent studies have also confirmed that job security plays a crucial role in influencing employee motivation in the workplace (Islam & Ismail, 2008; Chen & Hsieh, 2015). Furthermore, job security has a favorable effect on an employee's level of organizational commitment, subsequently influencing the overall performance of the organization (Hur & Perry, 2020). According to Pang and Lu (2018), job security is crucial to organizational motivation. Nagpaul et al. (2022) revealed that job security, which was classified as a hygiene factor, had a positive effect in reducing dissatisfaction. This finding was consistent with the motivating effect of recognition.

Training can be described as a systematic process of obtaining knowledge, abilities, or mindsets with the objective of improving performance, as described by Lazazzara and Bombelli (2011). According to Baldwin et al. (1991), those who exhibit greater pre-training motivation, which is fueled by their eagerness to engage in the training, generally attain better learning outcomes than those who have reduced pre-training motivation. Employee training refers to activities aimed at improving the current and future job performance of employees by enhancing their ability to work more efficiently (Ozkeser, 2019). The primary objective of training and development is the enhancement of employee performance through the cultivation

of job-specific knowledge and skills (Swanson, 1999). According to Truitt (2011), training is associated with the development of essential skills that enable employees to effectively engage in collaborative efforts with their colleagues, with the aim of achieving corporate goals and objectives. The core principles of employee training emphasize the delivery of substantial knowledge based on relevant theories, considering the aspects of effectiveness and efficiency, individual employee differences, and the necessity for continuous improvement (Hanaysha, 2016). Hammond and Churchill (2018) demonstrated a significant association between staff training and motivation. Training programs are designed to improve employees' understanding of how their individual jobs are aligned with the overall aims, structure, and mission of their business. As a result, employees are more likely to demonstrate increased levels of motivation and enthusiasm as they recognize the importance of their contributions to the overall success of their firm. According to Güllü (2016), the results of training programs are evident in the increased performance and motivation of employees. These factors play a crucial role in the achievement of organizational objectives. When employees are provided with opportunities to engage in training and development, they are more likely to experience higher levels of motivation and invest greater effort in order to achieve personal and organizational goals (Hanaysha & Hussain, 2018).

Throughout history, the implementation of employee empowerment has frequently been associated with policies and procedures that restrict workers from fully utilizing their innate abilities to achieve their maximum potential within the professional setting (Kuo et al., 2010). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) assert that empowerment is a complex notion that involves heightened intrinsic drive. This is further explicated through four cognitive dimensions that mirror an individual's approach to their professional role. The aforementioned elements encompass a perception of purpose, proficiency, self-governance, and impact.

According to Baird et al. (2018), employee empowerment is the systematic cultivation of workers' self-assurance and perceived proficiency.

Empowerment can be understood as a situation when organizational management fosters and implements intrinsic motivation among employees, hence facilitating their successful performance of assigned duties (Baird et al., 2018). Empowerment can also be defined as a managerial strategy that involves including employees in work processes by providing them with a role in the decision-making process (Chikazhe & Nyakunuwa, 2022). Employees who are empowered have high levels of motivation and a strong dedication to actively engaging in environmentally responsible actions (Govindarajulu & Daily, 2004). On the contrary, personnel who do not possess empowerment exhibit a diminished level of commitment toward enhancing their performance in comparison to their empowered counterparts (Argyris, 1998). Employees who exhibit empowerment, which is defined as having the ability to make autonomous decisions, are more likely to display a greater level of engagement in activities to improve the environment (Meyerson & Dewettinck, 2012). Furthermore, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) revealed that employees who are given autonomy in their job tasks demonstrate higher levels of motivation and achieve greater performance outcomes than their peers.

The literature review reveals a complex interplay between job security, employee training, employee empowerment, and employee motivation. In addition, these constructs are pivotal drivers of employee motivation. Understanding these factors is essential for fostering a motivated workforce in diverse organizational environments.

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of job security, employee training, and employee empowerment on employee motivation in the SME sector. Thus, it is hypothesized that

- H1: *Job security positively affects SME employees' work motivation.*
- H2: *Employee training positively affects SME employees' work motivation.*
- H3: *Employee empowerment positively affects SME employees' work motivation.*

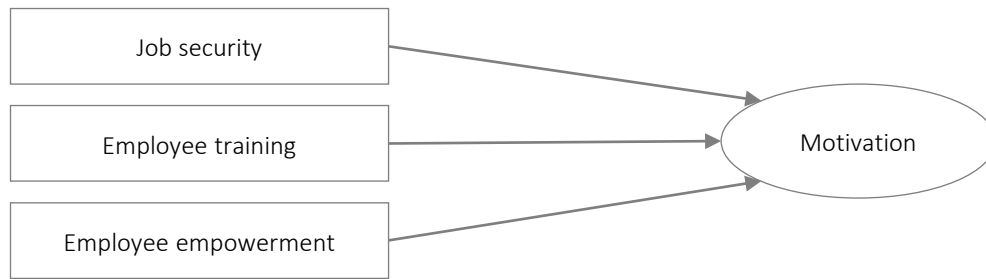


Figure 1. Research model

2. METHODOLOGY

Within the framework (Figure 1) of this study, employing a quantitative methodology and acknowledging the importance of work motivation in understanding the actions of individuals, the optimal approach was administering a structured, closed-response questionnaire. Survey questionnaires were distributed to employees working in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Bangladesh. The inclusion of participants in the study was dependent on their having at least one year of professional experience in the relevant company. A sample of 400 small and medium-sized firms across six divisions of Bangladesh was selected. The aforementioned organizations were selected to cover a diverse range of industry sectors and exhibited a workforce size ranging from 10 to 250 individuals. This deliberate sampling approach aimed to provide a representative snapshot of the larger SME landscape in Bangladesh. In order to ensure the achievement of the minimum

sample size, a sequence of subsequent actions was implemented, which involved conducting telephone outreach to employees of SMEs.

The survey method is distinguished by its structured nature in contrast to other qualitative approaches like interviews. It is commonly utilized for data collection from larger populations. Out of 400 distributed questionnaires, 284 questionnaires were received back, resulting in a response rate of about 71%.

Table 2. Sources of study variables

Variables	References
Employee Motivation	Hanaysha and Hussain (2018)
Job Security	Bibi et al. (2016)
Employee Training	Hanaysha and Hussain (2018)
Employee Empowerment	Hanaysha and Hussain (2018)

The data were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The dimensions were evaluated using measure-

Table 1. Reliability and validity of the study variables

Construct	Items	Loading	Cronbach's (α) value
Motivation (MTVTN)	MTVTN1	0.749	0.935
	MTVTN2	0.836	
	MTVTN3	0.732	
	MTVTN4	0.836	
Job security (JBSEER)	JBSEER1	0.733	0.836
	JBSEER2	0.841	
	JBSEER3	0.805	
	JBSEER4	0.946	
Employee training (TRNG)	TRNG1	0.902	0.803
	TRNG2	0.946	
	TRNG3	0.833	
Employee empowerment (EMEMPR)	EMEMPR1	0.883	0.778
	EMEMPR2	0.772	
	EMEMPR3	0.849	

Note: $n = 284$.

ment scales derived from existing earlier research (Table 2). The selection of these scales was based on their established dependability, as indicated by Cronbach’s alpha values surpassing 0.70 (Table 1), and their previous utilization in multiple research with a similar demographic of respondents. After the development of the final questionnaire, it underwent a validation procedure by being critically evaluated by academic specialists affiliated with institutions of higher education prior to its distribution.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 provides a detailed breakdown of the demographic characteristics of SME employees. It presents information on their age distribution, marital status, job tenure, gender composition, and educational attainment, using frequencies and corresponding percentages to give a clear overview.

Table 3. Demographic information

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
21-30 years	67	23.6
31-40 years	98	34.5
41-50 years	108	38.0
More than 40 years	11	3.9
Marital Status		
Married	165	58.1
Single	118	41.5
Divorced	1	0.4
Job Tenure		
Less than one year	62	21.8
One to five years	80	28.2
Six to ten years	106	37.3
More than ten years	36	12.7
Gender		
Male	177	62.3
Female	107	37.7
Education		
Bachelor Degree	163	57.4
Postgraduate Degree	119	41.9
Diploma Certificate	2	0.7

Note: n = 284.

A significant majority were in the 31-40 age range, comprising 34.5% of the entire sample. This is closely followed by persons aged 41-50, account-

ing for 38.0%. In contrast, employees between the ages of 21 and 30 comprise a smaller but still considerable group, representing 23.6%. Employees over 40 make up a negligible 3.9%. The employee pool exhibits a predominance of married persons, accounting for 58.1% of the sample, while singles make up a significant 41.5%. In contrast, the number of employees who are divorced is very low, making up only 0.4%. An examination of work tenure patterns reveals a diverse environment, with a significant proportion of employees displaying a tenure ranging from six to 10 years, making up 37.3%. Next in line are individuals who have been employed for one to five years, making up 28.2% of the total, while employees with less than one year of experience make up 21.8%. Next, 12.7% comprises employees who have worked for ten years or more. The gender dynamics reveal a clear majority of male employees, accounting for 62.3%, compared to female employees, who make up 37.7%. The majority of employees, 57.4%, possess a Bachelor’s degree, while a significant 41.9% have postgraduate degrees. In contrast, the number of employees with diploma credentials is quite low, representing only 0.7%.

Table 4. Descriptive analysis of the study variables

Variables	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Employee Motivation	284	4.035	0.3390
Job Security	284	4.101	0.4996
Employee Training	284	3.985	0.5494
Employee Empowerment	284	4.238	0.7497

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of the study variables related to the SME employees’ contextual motivation. The variables examined include employee motivation, job security, employee training, and employee empowerment.

Table 5. Normality test

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
Employee Motivation	-0.364	0.383
Job Security	0.647	-0.103
Employee Training	0.173	-0.342
Employee Empowerment	-0.143	0.745

The results of the normality evaluation are within the designated range (see Table 5). Therefore, it is considered acceptable.

Table 6. Correlation matrix

Variables	MTVTN	TRNG	EMEMPR	JBSER
Employee Motivation (MTVTN)	1.000			
Employee Training (TRNG)	0.274**	1.000		
Employee Empowerment (EMEMPR)	0.498**	0.226**	1.000	
Job Security (JBSER)	0.483**	0.434**	0.480**	1.000

Note: ** $p < 0.05$ ($n = 284$).

Table 6 presents a correlation matrix elucidating the relationships among key dependent and independent variables. The correlations presented are statistically significant at the 0.05 level, based on a sample size of 284 observations. Moving to the relationship between employee motivation and employee training, a positive correlation coefficient of 0.274 is observed, suggesting a statistically significant relationship. Similarly, a positive correlation coefficient of 0.498 is noted between employee motivation and employee empowerment, indicating a statistically significant association. Lastly, the correlation coefficient between employee motivation and job security is 0.483, suggesting a statistically significant positive association between these variables.

Table 7. Regression coefficient analysis

Variables	β -value	t -value	Sig.
Job Security	0.385	4.946	0.000**
Employee Training	0.495	6.173	0.000**
Employee Empowerment	0.583	8.048	0.000**

Note: $R^2 = 52.20\%$. Durbin Watson value = 1.937; ** $p < 0.05$ ($n = 284$).

Table 7 displays the findings of a regression coefficient analysis that investigates the factors influencing employee motivation, which is referred to as the dependent variable. The analysis includes job security, employee training, and employee empowerment as independent variables. The t -values associated with each β coefficient assess the statistical significance of the relationship. All variables show statistically significant relationships with employee motivation, as evidenced by the t -values of 4.946 for job security, 6.173 for employee training, and 8.048 for employee empowerment. The significance level is marked by ** $p < 0.05$, indicating statistical significance at the 0.05 level. Table 7 also tests the hypotheses; it indicates that $R^2 = 52.20\%$ or 52.2% determined the variance in motivation, which consists of three independent variables, accepted at a 5% significance level.

$H1$ is accepted at a 5% level ($\beta = 0.385$; $p < 0.05$). This finding is consistent with previous studies, as the high level of job security among SME employees has a substantial impact on their motivation at the workplace (Soliman & Altabtai, 2023; Ghodrati & Tabar, 2013). It indicates that a heightened level of job security in the employees' perception will result in a higher rate of motivation (Senol, 2011). Job security is a vital factor influencing employee motivation in organizational environments. Providing secure job conditions is frequently linked to increased employee motivation. Employees who regard their jobs as secure are more inclined to demonstrate higher levels of commitment, engagement, and productivity in their respective positions (Purohit & Bandyopadhyay, 2014). The association between job security and individuals' investment of efforts and abilities toward organizational goals arises from the sense of psychological safety and stability that job security offers, creating a favorable atmosphere.

Moreover, job security plays a crucial role in the connection between employers and employees in the social exchange. When organizations focus on upholding secure work conditions, employees respond with heightened loyalty and dedication (Raza et al., 2015). This bilateral exchange promotes a favorable work atmosphere characterized by confidence, allegiance, and reciprocal assistance, which also boosts employee drive. Furthermore, job security has an impact on other facets of employee motivation, including internal factors like job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors. Employees with a sense of job stability are more likely to have increased levels of job satisfaction due to the decreased stress and worry that come with employment insecurity. Moreover, job security motivates employees to actively participate in discretionary actions that contribute to the organization's welfare since they view themselves as committed long-term members dedicated to its prosperity.

H2 is accepted at a 5% level ($\beta = 0.495$; $p < 0.05$). This finding aligns with other research, indicating that providing extensive training to employees at small and medium-sized enterprises significantly influences their motivation in the workplace (Zahra et al., 2014; Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2008). Employee training is crucial in influencing employee motivation in organizational settings. Offering comprehensive training programs is frequently linked to increased employee motivation. Training efforts enable employees to gain new skills, knowledge, and abilities. This not only improves their job performance but also enhances their sense of self-efficacy and professional progress. The feeling of competence and mastery encourages intrinsic motivation, as individuals feel empowered and confident in their ability to efficiently complete their tasks. Moreover, employee training functions as a means to tackle job security apprehensions and foster employee motivation. Organizations that allocate resources toward enhancing the skills and abilities of their employees demonstrate dedication to fostering the long-term advancement and achievement of their workforce (Anwar, 2021). Training efforts alleviate employees' sentiments of job insecurity and uncertainty by offering possibilities for skill growth and career advancement. Consequently, employees are more inclined to perceive themselves as being appreciated and protected in their roles, which ultimately results in higher levels of job contentment and drive.

Furthermore, the correlation between employee training and motivation goes beyond the enhancement of particular skills. Training programs frequently function as platforms for cultivating a favorable organizational culture distinguished by knowledge acquisition, cooperation, and originality. Participating in training sessions exposes employees to novel concepts, optimal methods, and developing patterns in their respective domains, hence fostering creativity and inspiring innovative problem-solving approaches (Thaler et al., 2017). The provision of ongoing training possibilities fosters a dynamic work environment that promotes employee engagement and motivation.

H3 is accepted at a 5% level ($\beta = 0.583$; $p < 0.05$). This finding aligns with other research,

indicating that providing extensive training to employees at small and medium-sized enterprises significantly influences their motivation in the workplace (Tutar et al., 2011; Hanaysha & Hussain, 2018). The importance of employee empowerment in influencing employee motivation within organizational contexts has been well acknowledged. Multiple studies have emphasized the positive correlation between employee empowerment and motivation, underscoring the substantial influence of empowering techniques on improving employee engagement, dedication, and performance. Empowerment measures, such as granting decision-making authority, allowing autonomy in job execution, and including employees in decision-making processes, have been shown to cultivate a feeling of ownership and responsibility among employees. The feeling of ownership fosters intrinsic motivation among employees as they become more personally invested in their work and its results. Empowered employees are more inclined to exhibit elevated levels of initiative, inventiveness, and proactivity in their positions, motivated by a sincere aspiration to make a meaningful contribution to the organization's success.

Moreover, there is a correlation between employee empowerment and heightened job happiness and fulfillment among employees. When individuals are given the authority to undertake difficult jobs, make choices, and have independence in their work, they feel a stronger sense of achievement and satisfaction. The contentment employees feel with their work leads to increased levels of motivation as they find personal fulfillment in their empowered roles and contributions (Sibota, 2010). Furthermore, employee empowerment fosters a favorable organizational culture marked by trust, cooperation, and creativity. Employees who feel empowered are more inclined to participate in transparent communication, exchange ideas, and cooperate with their colleagues to resolve issues and accomplish shared objectives. The culture of collaboration fosters creativity and innovation, leading to ongoing improvement and overall enhancement of organizational performance.

CONCLUSION

The motivation of employees is essential for the transformation of any organization. Therefore, it is crucial for employers and managers to ascertain the requirements and anticipations of their staff and comprehend the factors that motivate them to improve their efficiency. The main focus of this paper was to investigate how employee empowerment, job security, and employee training influence employee motivation within small and medium-sized enterprises located in Bangladesh. The findings indicated that each of the three independent variables – employee empowerment, job security, and employee training – exhibited a noteworthy association with employee motivation. Furthermore, employee empowerment, job security, and employee training are strongly correlated with employee motivation, meaning that if employees are empowered, they have secured job and they are given proper training, then they will be more motivated to work productively. The identification of factors that influence employee motivation can significantly aid SMEs in achieving their organizational goals with a motivated workforce.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: K. M. Anwarul Islam, Farhana Islam, Sabina Yasmin.

Data curation: K. M. Anwarul Islam.

Formal analysis: K. M. Anwarul Islam, Farhana Islam, Sabina Yasmin.

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Methodology: K. M. Anwarul Islam, Farhana Islam, Sabina Yasmin.

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Supervision: K. M. Anwarul Islam.

Validation: K. M. Anwarul Islam, Farhana Islam, Sabina Yasmin.

Visualization: K. M. Anwarul Islam, Farhana Islam, Sabina Yasmin.

Writing – original draft: K. M. Anwarul Islam, Farhana Islam, Sabina Yasmin.

Writing – review & editing: K. M. Anwarul Islam, Farhana Islam, Sabina Yasmin.

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